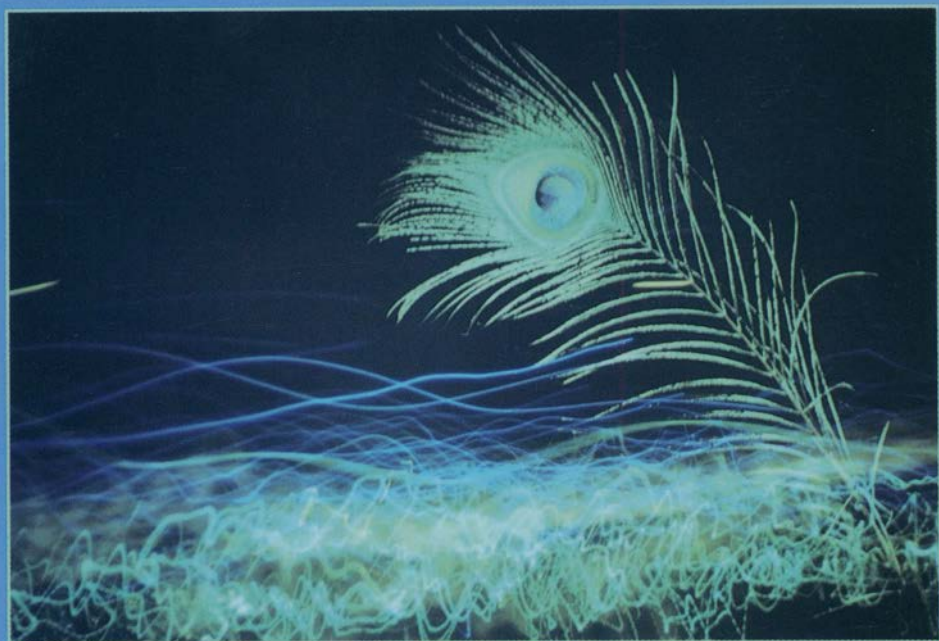


The Alembic



Spring 1990

THE ALEMBIC

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The Alembic logo of a distillation device appearing on the back cover represents the distillation of talent from Providence College students and faculty, as well as from national writers, without whom this publication would not be possible. The drawing was contributed by Lisa Santamaria.

ON THE COVER: Michael Bellotti's photograph, untitled, was taken in 1983 in Tennessee where Bellotti lives with his wife and one child.

An earlier version of *Economic Dilemmas of the Latin American Left* by Benedict J. Clements appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

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Poetry & Fiction

The Illustrations

Slide upon slide,
Transparencies of Nile and Sphinx,
Dragoman, hieroglyph,
Dark sunset golds, hot pinks
Over old Dr. Bean's white shirtfront glide.
Each then, as if

Through gorges worn
Smooth by his voice and theme,
Is swept, borne backwards, up tonight's
Eerily narrowed, smoky-crystal stream.
Back? sigh the date palms, mourn
The circling kites,

Back!—as the hole
Drilled in darkness, radiant nil
Of the projector's brow,
Calls each in turn, from banks that overspill,
Back to the Source. The soul
Will keep her vow.

Bruce Weigl

Elegy for the Swans at Grace Pond

Bored with bread the children
throw to her, the swan
who lost her great love

when summer ran its unexpected
course through his heart and he
washed up, tangled in the cold

dawn, drowned in the roots
of the willow, clings to the blue
pond and its amnesia.

Grief makes her circle the shadow,
float in the willow's shadow
where she waits

for him to reappear
evenings when the light fades
and each lap of waves

grows greener.
Before a hole opened up
in the life they'd invented somewhere

in the clouds, we watched them tangle
their necks around each other,
sailing side by side

as if love could save them.
I don't think her lover will return,
or that the moon will last

long enough through the trees
so she may find a passage
out of the boundaries of her grief.

The music draped shadows of lace about the clear sick room and clothed my body. A knife. If only I could thrust the little flower into my gut and die. It's the worst frustration known to me. I want to die. A gun. Destruction of the hideous malignant object lodged beneath my skull. There are bars on the window. I can't even fantasize. I'm on the goddamn second floor. It would be so beautiful: my limbs and organs forming a symphony of color of the creation of the human race upon an area of dried cement. The bed is an old man and I'm lying on top of the bastard. Each day it grows stronger. The loveliness. The floor is covered with piss and thousands of white roses. I watch the blood leak out of the retard's nose like hundreds of red ants emerging and flowing from a small hole in the earth. The smell of sweat and anesthesia is so funny. I laugh at the drool down the front of the skinny woman's sterile gown. Her rectum has fallen out again today. In her eyes, though, pulse court jesters and dancers all dressed in red satin with white faces and wide mouths. The goblins lick my feet, tickling them with their green, rubbery tongues and I laugh in nausea. The retard is now rocking back and forth with his tongue bouncing up and down out of his mouth and the bed squeaks like the fan in the office that bears a stench of stale cigarettes and the dead body hanging by a rope from the ceiling. The children all now come toward me, smiling like angels. Their eyes are no more than blood crusted sockets and their little fangs slide greedily out of their gums. The wax from the candles they hold in their pale hands drips into my mouth and burns my throat. I scream a most silly, gurgling cry. The frail, delicate fat woman is slapping my face. I hear violins all about me like icy crystal flames and I watch the humorous rats munching in the slaughterhouse. I can't punish myself through death. This is what adults warn children about. They'll rot in Hell. They'll decompose inside of me.

Breathe The Night

And the music divides the night into feeling
and sound and fantasy, feeding the earth some
of its anger, providing a pulse that we can
feel from the second floor

Some have found their escape, like meditation,
like scribbled mind poetry thrust into a series
of involuntary images, illusions, and the heart-
beat screams a secret message, the eyes dilate,
the nerves disintegrate like atoms smashed,
leaving the mind to its own endeavors

And soon the night fills this room, erases the
shadows that the moon etched upon the ceiling
just moments ago, and the dreams fade into the
fabric of the sound, this music, the first sign
of reality to feed the mind, not very pleasing,
almost painful, as the eyes begin to grasp an
object of discontent, a streetlight perhaps

And the music divides the mind into despair and
regret and desire, struggling to retrieve its
escape once more, knowing that it cannot elude
morning, the advent of this daily progression,
a series of hopeless interactions, leading
mercilessly back toward the darkness

Demian Yattaw

To The Other Side

Mind blown, racing, toward the distant
outline of the shattered city, the product
of our worst nightmares

It is believed that sin is transformational,
like cocaine, and the soul is swallowed by
the night, without sun or moon or stars,
just the faces of the insane pale fools
the neon ladies with war paint on the nails
and face, and soul, and the junkies, lined up
along the alleyway, in the distance themselves,
but soon to return to the darkness, after their
dreams

and you're halfway there but you can't be sure
whether this really begins, or ends, so you
decide that purgatory is acceptable because it
was adopted as paradise by the politicians and
the pushers and the pimps who justify their
deceits, dream of innocence, and you convince
your conscience to meet you here in the darkness,
between sin and sainthood, life and death, within
the body, without return, because the soul is
human today, but not forever.

Lyndon Libre

They'll chew you up
and spit you out, said mother,
mother said, but she was dead,
before she saw the first red marks,
where the teeth bit deepest.
Praise God she never knew
that it would become patriotic
for quixotic Americans
to turn against their comet of a man,
until like wolves in dove's clothing,
they ran him down
on the steps of a white house,
the front door like that plywood door
of Reata Ranch in Giant,
open on nothing,
though you all call it President.
In ancient times, a pharaoh
might sacrifice himself,
might through the shedding of his blood
save his subjects from drought,
disease and other forms of tragedy,
until the ritual became
simply strapping on a panther's tail,
a symbol of renewal,
so when my falling came,
I pulled on my handlashed boots,
my spurs, Stetson,
chaps and six gun
and with a thunderclap
chose to ride the range
where only thorny, yellow roses grow
upon the once and future fruited plain.
Historians say that toward the end
I disengaged, even staged
my own tumble from the precipice called Vietnam.
I called her name in my sleep,
the black-haired bitch
who kept her knees together.
Whether I cursed, cried or begged
she denied me
and even when tied down and spread-legged,
gave me no pleasure,
defeat the only treasure buried there.

Three days, I lay in Gallups' cave,
until the stonehearted populace rolled back
and I was saved by a cowboy all in black.
He gave me tobacco, hardtack,
two packhorses and a map
and said retrace your life
and everywhere I set my feet,
my own face looked up at me
without a trace of recognition
and only when I camped on the banks of this Mekong
of the mind did I find
I had not been erased.
Now I sit before the fire.
I swap tales with myself and sing
of herding human cattle endlessly
across the borders wars can always penetrate,
but never quite make disappear,
while those who suffer fear, poverty
race and class hate
are still outside barbed wire fences, iron gates,
any place but beside us at the table,
eating off our spotless plates.
I tried to change that,
but I could not break the locks
that kept me in the magic circle
known as the sovereign state.
My Great Society cavalry arrived too late
to deliver me from the cavalry I had created
and only one man waited
at the foot of my rugged cross.
As I climbed down,
Bobby caught the dice I threw him,
blew on them twice,
tossed them and said, 'Luck O' The Irish.'
Before they hit the ground, his heart exploded
and showered silver coins instead of blood;
yet cost me all a second time,
for martyrs never lose.
Blame my gradual disintegration
on intellectuals too,
ungrateful Negroes and the poor,
all beating at the door, until I bade them enter,
then found myself at epicenter of an earthquake
that still shakes the foundations of this country,
because in my wake came Nixon's Watergate
and later, the final betrayal of FDR's New Deal,
the ideology which now and then
Republicans steal
to accomodate the latest twists and turns
of their crooked highways.

But I know you'll cry
who am I to condemn,
who am I to say what price should be paid
to win and not.
If somehow the ends got mixed up with the means
well, that's not Communism, that's democracy,
that's the thin, red line
between the white and the blue.
I hope to God that will save you
from the politician's stew
of promises impossible to keep,
but me, I'm having barbecued spareribs
this Fourth of July, 1989,
pinto beans, corn on the cob.
At last I want to celebrate the brief time
inside the walls of Camelot,
when I was king of comedy,
before I abdicated.

A Portuguese Romance

I don't really know why the whole thing happened. All I know is that I didn't have any dinner that night. Neither did anyone else in the house. Who wanted to eat cod fish knowing Mom had just thrown the dirty fish water at Victor's girl? No one, I tell you. Let me explain.

My brother Victor was dating this American girl. Now she wasn't really my taste, but hey, she wasn't my girl either. She used to come around the house wearing what our block calls a biker's outfit. It's just a skin suit with some fluorescent green bicycle wheels showing here and there. Mom didn't like this very much. It wasn't just that the girl's clothes were too tight, it was that the girl had no business in tight clothes. You know what I mean?

But Victor liked her. Victor liked her a lot. That's one thing about my brother, if he says he likes you he means it. And Mom knows that too. Personally I think Mom just didn't like the girl because she was American. See, for my Mom that means a girl is loose. An American girl has to be loose because she doesn't know any better. And she doesn't know any better because she comes from a bad family. How does Mom know it's a bad family? She's American! Everyone knows American families don't go back enough to prove anything about themselves. Not like us.

Portuguese families are good families. Respectable people is what we are. We make an honest life for ourselves. And we have generations of proof. Real and secure proof. Like the time my great-grandfather borrowed two cows and three chickens for my grandmother's wedding. My great-grandfather couldn't pay the cows and chickens back after he borrowed them. So my grandfather, who married my grandmother, had to pay them back. He had to. If he didn't then his family wouldn't be respectable anymore because they were now related to my grandmother's family through him. So my grandfather just paid back the two cows and three chickens since it had been for his wedding anyway. And both families continued to be respectable.

So in comes my mother who doesn't like Victor's girlfriend. My mom thinks the girl will marry Victor and then because we'll be related to her bad family our family will be ruined forever. It doesn't matter to Mom that Victor's only fourteen. Actually between you and me I think my mother's afraid this American girl will get my brother "in trouble." I heard her talking about it once to my F-A-T-H-E-R so I know it's a very serious situation.

Anyway, getting back to why we didn't have dinner tonight, the American girl came over the house today. Victor, Frankie, Linda me and Johnny were sitting on the front steps when she came by. She stopped and talked to us for a while. My Mom must have heard her through the walls or something because she came out of the house screaming at this girl to get away from her son and her house because there was no way that she'd (my Mom) let her (Victor's girl) ruin the respectability of our family. She said some other things but I'm too young to spell that stuff. All of this yelling didn't really affect anyone except Victor who turned a nice shade of cran-

berry. Me, Frankie, and Linda were used to Mom yelling like that and Victor's girl doesn't understand a syllable of Portuguese. My mother could have been yelling at a dead cat for all she knew. Victor, of course, did not bother to translate.

So after my Mom slammed the door on us and went back into the house, we continued to do what we were doing before she came out, which was talk.

Not even five minutes later my mom comes out of the house again carrying the big bowl she had been cleaning the cod fish in. The bowl was full of fish water. My Mom lifted the bowl and aimed it at Victor's American girl. My mom's a real good aimer and within two seconds Victor's girl was a real bad smeller.

Victor's depressed now because he doesn't think she'll come around anymore. My Mom's happy to know that she has once again successfully preserved her family's respectability. And me, I'm just glad the fish wasn't in the bowl too because I know that fish is going to turn up as leftovers tomorrow.

Diane Bernard

Nowthenheretherewhatever

Front seat of your rollercoaster?

Yes.

Back flip of mental gymnastics?

Yes.

Sideways crabwalk?

Yes.

Above the clouds?

Yes.

Beneath the ocean?

Yes.

Next to whom?

Lida Aronne-Amestoy

Philosophism

I wished to walk as far as the world's corner
and some day go around it
walk through other peoples' customs
along the thirty centuries
 of philosophy
throughout the planetary chain
and the neuron's ultimate labyrinth
and the soul's metaphor
 into the depths of its rose

My step got trapped
 in mirrors
circular alley where prestigious corpses
 rot

Faust
Verne
The man on the moon

Today I have walked farther than everyone
I have reached you
 who are walking with me

Lida Aronne-Amestoy

Translated from the Spanish by Lida Aronne-Amestoy and Forrest Gander

Inertia

chain with no ends
the Council of Grandparents will not relinquish
 its web
around the skeleton
I am a breaking wave
and some primal undertow
 nets my every drop
in old shipwrecks

now I'm imposing on you new conditions of old
the hundred names of hunger
in the remote homelands
summa of

 lost paradises
inside and out
I'm proposing another of the same withdrawals
at the edge of your
 just hoisted void

fiction of will
 recycled puppet
I trip on each erratum
in the Dictionary of Archaisms
 of the species

suddenly a hurricane odor
cuts off the threads of memory
sets my feet
 on your vanishing brink
once again scintillating
 presence
ballet of desire lifts me
submerged in your
 unsung vertigo

DIRECTIONS

- I. Please state your name, age, and association with me (i.e. how your arrival here came about).
- II. Please give accurate, detailed descriptions of events and emotions which occurred within the past two hours. You have 45 minutes to complete this before I kill you, so work rapidly. I wish the best of skill and clear thinking to you.

My name is Bert Walters and I'm 23 years old. I got a letter in the mail two weeks ago for me to kill some broad. It said I'd get paid \$5000 for the job and they'd even get rid of the body.

It said

We'll pay you \$5000 to kill Sheila Bryce.

Do it two weeks from today.

And it had a list of things

1. 273 Drickle Lane. The key is under the cat's water dish.
2. She'll arrive home at 5:15 pm. Only you and she will be there.
3. Strangle her. Nothing else.
4. Put her body in your trunk. Drive to Deep Swamp Road. Take a left onto the dirt road past the old schoolhouse. Drive 1.6 miles to my cottage. We will dispose of her body.

It seemed like easy money and safe cuz someone else was ditching the body and that's the hardest part. If I'd known

EDITOR'S NOTE

Bert's time is up. Apparently unable to collect his thoughts, he wasted most of his time cursing, whining and finally copying my instructions instead of following the simple directions. I shall personally expand on what Bert inadequately expressed. This little written exercise I requested of him is for my journal, a record, if you will, of feelings about murdering and being murdered, both of which he experienced in the past hour and a half. Needless to say, his entry failed miserably. As of yet 125 insufficient attempts have been made before his, and I feel it necessary to explain everything myself.

I am a cannibal. Human flesh is the most succulent delicacy known to my palate and I enjoy consuming it almost as much as acquiring it. I take pride in the careful way I choose my Treats; you see, I do a special service to society by ridding it of criminals. Therefore calling myself a modern-day hero is not a justification of my eccentricity; it is the pure and simple truth.

From years of trial and error, I have sharpened my skill from a hobby, to a science, to the highest form, degree and sense of art. I always

obtain my Treats in pairs, one always killing the other. This coupling system has numerous advantages, and is the least risky form of premeditated murder I have developed. With one killing the other it reduces the necessary unpleasanties for me. I have no hunger for causing nor witnessing suffering, for I am sensitive to the pain and grief of others. However, I am driven by an innate desire, an uncontrollable craving, to eat humans. Another advantage is that I am never at the scene of the murder. No accusations could ever be made about me. If one of my Treats should bungle his mission, it is he who is caught, not I. I would never have even been acquainted with the victim, so what possible motives would drive me to arrange her murder? He may have a typed letter of instructions bearing directions to my house, but who could prove I wrote it? My facade as a peaceful hermit is indestructible.

Being a cannibal conveniently disguised as a recluse has its advantages as well. Living in desolation on the shores of Deep Swamp means no inquisitive neighbors prying into my life, and makes for easy disposal of cars and bones. I live in uninterrupted bliss, while also ridding society of corruption. Selecting those among the ranks of the corrupt is a science in itself. I keep on file the names of anyone who appears in the police log of the newspaper. Since I live just outside the suburbs of a large city, the section is generally large. I consider it my calling to stop certain names from reappearing. The two beauties who are now guests in my home were repeat offenders who will not be missed.

The woman, Sheila Bryce, was a prostitute. That in itself does not warrant her termination; however, she forced her thirteen year old daughter into the same line of work. The girl killed herself. Her obituary briefly mentioned the aforementioned accusation, but no evidence could be found to convict Sheila. I knew it was true because I had been spying on Sheila for quite some time, ever since her name appeared on the police log one year ago.

The man, Bert Walters, was accused of violently assaulting two women several years ago. Why he was never sent to jail I do not know, but his name again appeared this past April for possession of a concealed weapon. When I saw that and connected it with his previous charges, I knew he would have no qualms about killing someone. So I wrote to him offering payment for the murder of Sheila Bryce.

I always contract a man to perform the initial slaying. I am not sexist; it is a biological fact that men are physically stronger than woman and a statistical fact that men commit more acts of violence than women. However, women scheme much better than men and can accomplish murder with little or no risk of being caught. For example, I have never been suspected of choreographing 126 assassinations. Think about it—how many female serial killers have ever been caught?

So. I carefully plan the murder, studying the one I want killed until I know her every habit. Then with my simple step-by-step instructions, I tell my hired accomplice what to do. I make each statement brief, for length could create confusion. The only detail I specify is that murder be achieved by strangulation. A gunshot would draw attention to the scene, as well as create a bloody mess. The assassin could also miss his target. Stabbing is equally messy—also the victim dies slowly, giving plenty of chances to scream or escape. Poison is too complicated for the mental capacity of the accomplice and there is too much room for error. Besides this, I do not want to consume tainted flesh which may be harmful to me. Strangulation is

clearly the best method. Quiet, neat, quick, and somewhat painless—I highly recommend strangulation and would want no other means of death even for myself.

As of yet, none of the 126 which I have personally killed in my own home have ever tried to kill me. Perhaps the “we” in my instructions successfully conveys the illusion that I am not alone. Once he enters my home I instruct him to deposit the corpse in the smaller back room before I give him the promised sum. I then lock him inside where he has no chance of escape.

The room is windowless and the steel door is tightly sealed. Once the door is shut the only opening in the room is a vent through which carbon monoxide from my car is pumped in. Before I start the engine I explain through the vent that I am a cannibal and shall kill and eat him. This statement usually creates a fuss ending with his disbelief in my declaration. But once the exhaust from my car starts to billow into the room, any doubt concerning my sincerity is removed. I then point out the desk on which there are pens and a stack of paper marked DIRECTIONS. I explain the directions, emphasizing the part about events in the past two hours. I tell them to write about their feelings as they anticipated and committed murder and how they feel knowing I shall murder them. Then I lie.

I feel terrible about lying, for I am an honest person; however, it must be done. I say that if the piece is well written I shall release him. Without a promise like that, without some kind of hope, no one would write or try to write well. With the exception of successful killings and sumptuous recipes, there is nothing I appreciate more than literature written from the heart. Writing about taking life and writing to save one’s own life are the most perfect forms of this genre. So a few years ago I began a journal, giving each assassin his own entry to express his feelings to the best of his ability. Not one has done an adequate job, much to my great disappointment. Bert’s entry is the worst on record, but with my additions and overall knowledge of the master plan, his entry will be the most worthwhile to share with future generations. I shall have to arrange for it to be included in my will.

I have been expanding Bert’s creation for the past two hours and I shall have to conclude it at this time because signs of rigor mortis are beginning to appear in Sheila. I must skin, clean and carve her before she becomes too stiff and inedible.

After all, I hate seeing anybody go to waste.

The Bushes

It's evening, nearly quiet, and almost
dark except for the sky's rim along the hill.
There the bushes bow, communicating

as they have for a lifetime, I imagine.
Trying as hard as they do, I talk back
hidden here in the leaves, convinced

some kind of language will get through
to these bushes nodding momentarily
at the very idea. Notice that they

look and act like humans, over-stuffed
and stiff with the patience for listening.
As three or four really stand out

against the light, the bushes seem alert.
They seem all right, as if God himself
had rooted them for company. Drunkards

making it home after a day in heaven,
they wave at me, the halfway landmark,
and keep kicking their empties over the hill.

The Shell

I dreamed you were the sister I
always wanted, your hair suddenly
like my family's, more wiry
than your own.
Your white skirts, this balcony,
all familiar. Wait.
Of course you are my sister.
The knowledge at first is vague,
set against an ocean, clouds. It is
the beach, then this recollection
unfolding like a galaxy of sunlight on our skin,
the discovery so
magnificent these smiles
would never be believed by anyone. You treat me
like Balboa, richly welcomed
to the meaning of his passage. How we entered these spaces
summers ago, complained from the balcony to
the gulls, how we allowed this affection
as the thrill of finding what was thought
forever lost.
Now this is your house.
Outside, I stare
into rooms gone dark as mirrors
showing me the beach and the gulls shrieking
along the vacant strands all October.
How could you be my sister.
When I slept,
I dreamed of the shell
I step on every summer in the deep surf.
After a wave
there's only the smooth sand. Then you are there
to show me what you've found.
It is the color
of your hair. In it you hear the ways
of growing old, how we are bound. I tell you it is something
I will never touch.

Ed Moore

The Purchase

The man wakes curious,
leaves, struts, nods, smiles,

hums, waves, adores, flirts,
winks, dreams,

crosses, slows, walks,
turns, angrily flips off,

approaches, examines, fishes,
grasps, slips, regains,

rotates, slides, chats, flips through,
sticks under, and strolls

back down the street with
his newspaper under his arm.

Ed Moore

The Big Town

It is a million people in motion at
the beginning and the end

It is a yellow weave monopolizing
the grid

It is the restaurant with half
a car over the sidewalk

It is the reflection of one sun-scraper
in the mirror of another

It is the exhibits of men and paintings
from many impressions ago

It is the big playground smack, dab
center of the melee

It is the black, the white, the yellow
and the bearded men with little caps

It is the blackened sweatshirt and stubble
of the corner dough salesman

It is the rough drafts of poetry
thought out on walls

It is the underground jerking
stop, start, speed, stop

It is the cubicle on the south-side
for half a fortune a month

It is banana-chip ice cream
in the rooster-early hours

It is the brash symphony of profanity
horns, and air brakes

It is like riding a runaway
merry-go-round

Library 1:45

Debbie's ultimate NIGHTMARE

Mike

falls

on her

Ski-hat LADY

picks him

up

There is nothing
poetic
about this
POEM

Cobwebs 2:00 PM

gecko
Japanese
Khrishman
haywire
electrocution
vent
hypothesis
nonsense
Grave
bric-a-brac
sewing
white
soliloquy
writer's cramp
Captain
ferris wheel nausea
Bueller? Anyone? Anyone?
Christmas socks
plum pudding
my mother's apple pie
beans
berets
hell's Angels
grades
Hades
fiery Devil
reebok
tick-tock-tick
hickory dickory
pendulum
Poe
out OUT dAmN sEIF

Christmas Introductions

Cut-out ceiling-suspended snowflakes.
Among the persons kept in wheelchairs
a woman near the desk eyed me.
I kissed her cheek and introduced myself
again: I'm Ted, your son.
I might as well have just been born:
she smiled, nodded and read aloud
the big word on my card: Joy.

We walked the corridor for a while.
A man forgot the smoking rules
again: a male nurse scolded.
My Mother's hand squeezed mine hard
when a woman slapped her tray. Then
she relaxed and waved—this was a friend.

A lovely Azorean nurse smiled,
gazed at my Mother and said,
She's beautiful. I introduced myself
again. Her name was Sola—
a slender solitary figure
moving among her mind islands.

I'd wonder later: Do the names
mean so much? After all
my Mother could fret and poke me,
wince and moon. Still I asked her
one more time the hardest question:
Do you remember Helen?
She fidgeted. No, she said.
Helen, I said, meet Helen.
She smiled and nodded.

We watched the Christmas sun go down
on the statehouse dome of Providence.
Slowly her days were growing longer.
She rubbed the cold steel window sill.

Ten Prayers Before an Open Casket

I.

I come to the coffin, surrendering my breath
to the enormity of the chrysanthemums.

II.

The relatives mourn the absoluteness of death,
betraying the failings of their faith.

III.

My late uncle's remaining brothers
are standing; his sisters are sitting.
They are strong in their tragedy,
strong in the togetherness of their Italian black.

IV.

My uncle's face, made paltry
by Legionnaire's Disease, bone cancer, pneumonia
and various other scourges of God,
relaxes in its vindication like yellow clay.

V.

Like yellow clay,
with clay lips clamped quiet.
My eyes are not of sorrow formed today
but by detail are deformed.

VI.

My hands must resist the temptation to fold.
His quiet clay folds and wraps around my eyes
and I am blinded to everything
that might not be clay.

VII.

I did not know him well, my uncle.
But I think I know
why the conversers laugh with parched tongues.
They are beholding the flesh through newspapers.

VIII.

The flesh unmade. No word.
I have been listening to the universe for years,
and no word.
Not that I would know how to perceive
the pain of spirits that lack nerves.

IX.

Proposition: if X exists and is knowable,
then all else is not inconsequent.

X.

In the wake of death, it is not logic
which writes the hardy words.
It is not strength which stands behind what is heard alone
at the ultimate stone.
It disturbs the disturbance of sleep
that my poems can face death with florid faces,
that death constrains the killing words to exist...

It is they,
it is they that bear away
the casket through the shrouds of mist.

Tracey Newman

Disquiet

In the gray of the late winter afternoon
the sky growing ominous and black
heavy with the snow about to fall.
Sitting speechless in the car
waiting for it to warm up;
Neither one of us speaking
nor making a motion to utter any verbal sound.
I look out the windshield
noticing how the bleak black trees reach
their naked limbs to heaven
as if pleading with the mute sky.
And I want to plead
to the deaf dark sky
to your deaf, mute darkness.
It is always silent when it snows.

Stray Moments

We used to ask—remember? We said,
“...our daily bread.” And it came.
Now we want more, and security too:
“You can’t be too sure.” And,
“Why should we trust?—who says?”
And Old-Who does not speak any more.

They used to have Thunder talk, or
The Rivers, or Leaves, or Birds. It’s all
“Cheep, cheep” now. It’s a long time
since a cloud said anything helpful.
But last night a prophet was talking,
disguised as a clerk at the check-out stand:

“Gee, it’s been a good day!”
And we talked for awhile and I felt
that I wasn’t such a bad guy.
We stood there looking out at the evening.
And maybe what we said, in its way, was
Thanks for our daily bread.

William Stafford

How You Know

Everyone first hears the news as a child,
surrounded by money-changers and pharisees.
Then later, from gray trees on a winter day,
amid all the twittering, one flash of sound
escapes along a creek—some fanatic among
the warblers broken loose like a missionary
sent out to the winterland, and though the doors
that open on the creek stay closed for the cold,
and the gray people in their habitats don't look up,
you—a homeless walker stabbed by that bird cry—
stop mid-stride because out of a thicket
that little tongue turns history loose again, and holy
days asleep in the calendar wake up and chime.

William Stafford

Later

It will get cold
 they say.
 They say
there won't be any people.

A certain cloud
 hunts down
 the trail
of everybody.

But the main laws
 will stay,
 gravity, greed.
Maybe time.

Maybe justice.

Dina M. Barretti

Complex Proxemics Phonetics

(Schizophrenic word-association idiosyncrasy)

Flower

Pot hangs out of barred windows blood

geraniums green

grass speckled,

dry—

Hay, Day

Anyway

Help!

Don't Touch—orchid petals and

leaves dying inside

me delicate

peach-fuzz smoulders, soft

black crayon print of writhing smoke as

flame consumes each iridescent pale pink rent red

petal as the meta-

morphosis slowly

unfolds and

slips

slides down into the

charcoal madness that

marks a rite of passage.

Elena Milan

Translated from the Spanish by Forrest Gander

Folklore

And in spite of our beaming faces
 our charlatan music,
 our hats for defying the wind
we continue to be the lost ones:
their cannons against our paper and porcelain flags,
 against our love of sun and heights;
their weapons facing our snowballs and fireworks.
Nevertheless, we go dancing through the streets
to the rhythm of rattles, and clarinets with a thousand reeds,
between the wings of the angel and the goateed fiend.
But remember, centuries ago, in Siam
the dance was daily training.

Kyra Galvan

Translated from the Spanish by W.S. Merwin

Why Life Runs On And Does Not Happen

Life runs on and occurs everywhere
on all the distant roads to the city
There is a continuous motion on the highway
worm tanks on top of the mountain
trucks with freight and passengers
The wheat fields and the corn fields never take a rest
they run at the same speed
as the high tension towers
And there they are with their hats
selling oranges and avocados
getting sloshed on pulque
our cruising in their sleazy jackets
watching the chicks go by
The silence goes over its skin with slow blows
bruising it denting it
opening it into doughy absence
Live trembles and shines
full of fruit rind and spit
The capitals come to remodel their squares
and fill their streets with lamp posts
but they never get through the tanned skin
stretched tight with the salt water of loneliness
And the women kneel down
And they say their beads and their prayers
And the blood-stained Christ returns their stare but not a word
or maybe, yes, did he breathe?
Anyway the hot hands smolder
peeling chilis and carding wool
The huicholes and the coras
discover their animal guardian
with a hit of peyote
Surprised by the future
they slide between two dimensions
with their bodies beaten down like roads
with their breath punched open
with the hole left
by the words never said
in bed.

Kyra Galvan

Translated from the Spanish by W.S. Merwin

City Woman

For me the country
is a distant reality
I can't even disguise its distance
when love goes away
I don't pretend to go all soft at the sight of a plowed field
because my hands don't feel the earth
The only beehives I know are made of steel
Here you sink in the violence of an instant
and don't worry
about them giving or taking away from your land
Here you are dispossessed
and belong to the nothing of nobody
You don't believe in the prefabricated rain
falling from who knows what modern inventions
We run from one building to another and the sky
says no the whole time. Love says no too.
And in the blink of an eye
you learn and unlearn the rites of asphalt
You return to explore the innumerable islands
expert conductor of cut-off conversations.
You have no land.
You ought to court the concrete, but
you have no connection with anything—how could you?
No. The country and love never begin.
And you know
that the myths of the city continue without a break.

Pam Mulcahy

Refractions

Bend of light-
coaxed into a shadow.
Street lights
sparkle...in
rain
splashing down, washing
grey into the light
bent back
again.

bastille day

its warm out
(i can feel it through the open window)
not spring warm
but autumn warm,
the warm
that precedes cold
and lingers
like
an aftertaste-
the thankgod
marytoo
warm
my windows been opened
for awhile now
some leaves blew in, the holy ghost-
i pretended they were flaming tongues
and hoped they would set
the carpet on fire
its been going on
for some time (hours at least)
my head hurts
i can fit my thumb
in the hole they made
i stuck my index finger in
and they bit it off
now i have a finger-earring
dangling out of my head
i am a can of worms-
they slither out at the speed of light
 germs
 disease
grinning terracotta gargoyles
 teethy
 clawsy
 sharp
its amazing how many there are
the first one, jacques,
made the hole
he used a razor
that he found
in my left hemisphere
buried beneath a dingy heap
of grey matter

i think of the old needle-in-the-haystack
image-
razor-in-the-greystack now
jacques brought marie & the baby
the light hurt their eyes-
they thought the room was heaven
jacques said it was wrong for me
to lock them up
as theyd never done anything evil
i told him my superego disagreed
& he told me to go to hell
i told him he was looking at it
the baby was crying-
her name is elise
i shrunk when i saw
the shacklemarks on her arms and legs
marie complained about the food,
as they were quite illfed
during their sentence-
the butter was rancid
(it was crunchy with maggots)
& the bread stopped coming
after the first week
the water was coated with algae
marie pondered skating-rinks
they had to drink my cerebrospinal fluid-
sometimes they drank lymph
they keep calling me louis-
i cant understand
since my true name is lazarus
my head really hurts
jacques says to expect gangrene
i dont grasp the situation-
they just popped out of my skull
they say im in trouble
because others are upset
theyve arranged a meeting of some sort
their friends will arrive by trolley
from their filthy niche
in the nether-regions
of my cortex,
the rolling limbic grassy hills

starving a thought will not kill it-
jacques repeats this repeatedly
(he may be autistic)
the baby cannot talk
she gurgles hate-syllables
googoo means impale
marie insists i was wrong,

my neglecting them & all
it was foolish to think
they would never get out
thoughts have an energy
all their own
thoughts are neon-
they burn holes in things
jacques is chartreuse
marie is fuschia
elise has no color
but jacques claims shell be ultraviolet
someday
theyll be out soon, the rest
of their rebel-gang-
the trolley tickles the underbelly
of my scalp
elise plays with building blocks-
she constructs a tower
then knocks it down
I
see myself in the blocks
(they are mirror-shards)
& suddenly understand
why jacques calls me louis

the others will be here soon
-i can feel the trolley accelerate
past my fontanelles
its going to be a mess,
a real messy mess
jacques mumbles something
about a guillotine
i shouldnt have locked them up-
theyve grown spiteful with age
apres moi le deluge

le
head-thump
bucket-bang
bye-bye

Damaged Maps

Next to the disposal a young person
claims a relationship. Memory
will not deal with this unlikelihood.
Where are the usual features: eyes,

nose, some clue we have a face here?
Memory sneers in the grip of fear
and pithy vengeance. It beats
cold fists against the refrigerator

and insists, "This is how it was!
It was! And where, by the way,
is the silver corkscrew with orange
handle?" Best not to let strangers

in when memory is around, deranged
and cursing. There are dangers:
possible psychoses, flinging of bitters
bottles. Here is terror, there—

ecstasy. And the event? The event
is fluid, changeable, an amniotic
ocean. And the visitor? Simply
molecules in motion, projections.

Each human, unique, is lost
completely each minute and we
can't remember to say goodbye,
we can't remember to call Mother—

home after a week away at a famous
health-spa—and now her voice comes
through the wire as startling as
the sudden arrival of a camel

in red carpet regalia, ridden by
a small boy, and the kitchen not
ready to behold this apparition,
and the bellowing, the uproar—

it is quite unfair
and overwhelming and no
category is big enough
to contain such goings on.

Shame Comes Into This

So many—not just people—to love, who can
go on? Shame comes into this
equation. One is reduced to no
one, hiding away in an attic trunk
and the doorbell rings, embarrassing,
unanswered. Yes, you know I am
up here, wearing grandma's shriveled
velvet hat and sister's platform shoes,
leafing through copies of *National Geographic*
and then I may meander downstairs to fix
myself a bowl of soup and pimento
sandwich, guilt flavoring lunch
with a bitter aftertaste like Clorox
or Listerine, yet not a single crumb remains.

Camp Reunion

Nothing has changed: grassy walks, the lake, fat
kinder throwing crumbs to ducks, carousel
with smiling ticket-taker—and yet, a chill
sets in. I am carrying Mother in my arms.
She is so frail, nearly weightless,
it is no trouble. What an odd business:
something different and inevitable between us.
I plead, “After you’ve gone, you’ll keep in touch?”
She looks upset, “You know I can’t do that!”

And I say, “Please try, Mother, at least.”
I tuck her into a cot, like a doll, for a nap
then go off, holding a balloon, to join
the parade around the American flag,
forgetting to tie the string to my wrist.
The balloon lifts past a ground swell of daffodils
and sails over the pine tree tops. It is huge,
blue, the color of hyacinths—but of small
use, impractical. A sudden blur as it snuffs

off into nothing. I burst into tears; salt
stings my lips, making me homesick with shame.
Even so, I knew it would happen, frequent
knuckled raps insisting, “Give up this! No, that!”
The others, who wear clean Sunday smocks,
shiny shoes, and clutching the hands of Mamma
and Pappa, are grinning. I—alone—can’t stop
imagining what is certain, what will be lost,
only memory remaining and that vanishing.

Back on the Sea

Turn your back on the sea
and you, too, will hear its lashes
broadly sweep out against the likes of you,
its whispering hammers recede.
There's a jeering over
your shoulder and turning like Lot's
wife, another effusion of your long-
ing transmutes to stone. Stone you stand
on beaten by wind, mawed
by the great jaws of the sea that
glut her and guide her sprawling whips her de-
cided hilarity. Smashed stone
you walk on between pat-
ches of sea grass over the worn
path, a procession of old glori-
es winded before you face the
stairs after stairs you must
climb to get back to all you want
to leave. Now would be a good time to swiv-
el and plunge your heaving nostrils
her way, perhaps bow and
dare her to go on, implaca-
ble cannibal, the mother who feeds you
but lifts no finger for your wounds.
Dare her now. Dare yourself.

Wheat Field

Daisies smile in thoughts of
innocence.

The regal rose

 aflame

upon the branch

in vain—

as if she sees herself.

And tulips in

those rigid rows

appear as brazen soldiers

on display.

There are such subtle passions

in a wheat field:

waltzing shyly with a breeze,

solemn brown and shivering

as the ripples on the northern seas;

she sways so silently-

unmindful of my admiring eyes.

I stop to stare at her-

 intruder that I am;

as I approach she glances timidly

my way.

And as I walk along

my path again

-where noisy flowers beckon to be seen-

that field of wheat

still whispers in my dreams.

Music of the City

You can hear it. If you listen with the ears of a tourist you can hear it.

Alarms, keeping a demonic arpeggio, ringing with paranoid constancy. The blaring beeping of idiocy.

A woman blows shrill, panicking whistle, crying repeatedly beneath the weight of rasping date, shredding dress, unsnapping buttons, threatens in brass, yet drowned in applauding voices.

The roaring voices of Man-Car-Man, rataplan, Clackaclacking blinkers, the wheels, finding potholes, create a rhythm and the racket of their clattering cargo startles. Not skateboarders who whoosh, crash loose boards over the even frets of the sidewalk, sticks against wrought iron fences, chain earrings jingle on their turning heads, aware of the breeze, crossing the cobblestone walkways, scraping sneakers on sandy surface to stop.

SCREECH!! BANG!!! CRUNCH!!

A beat is missed...Accident, bicycle, polytech student equally mangled by the kiss of a Jaguar. Bystanders, gregorian, mumble. Police rage after well-to-do drunk. Denying, stumbling banging aluminum garbage cans, capriccio in the street, Italian shoes clacking stacatto on the pavement, breathes heavy into phonebooth, coins, a scattering ballet, clattering into the metal booth,

"Is there a lawyer in the house?"

A phone rings, two, five, a thousand, millions of phones, the connections are unbroken symphony, a teetering balance, translators' pause that the peace quietly relies on. Some instant communication, beepers cue the unaware.

A loudly clothed man rustles off, hearing his beeper, customers trembling, swishing dollars, wringing rings, watches in hands, await crack, heroin, cocaine, quiet choirboys. The same clinking coins, no need goes unheeded, control remains in specific ringed hands, drumming, tapping careful fingernails on oak desktops.

Each swinging conductor's hand signs,

"MINE!"

A different duet, a bottle, swishes in competing hands, drunken curses, falls into a hundred wet scattering pieces, triangles banging on the cement.

Yes, you can hear it. If you listen with the trusting ears of a child, you can hear it. The continuous percussion in every crunching clenched fist, the coal of truth, condenses into the diamond of lie, handed to the son, daughter, sparkling of eye in the static television.

It turns them on, listening to it jazz, jingle and jive, hear:

"Don't worry, be happy."

don't register the suggestions, buy this, do this, be this, don't argue, be passive, don't read, all is well in this city.

Think! you can hear it repeating in its flat affect computer voice,

"Change is not necessary, man is less necessary."

A politician shouts,

"Defense!"

offensive baritone betrayal, a patriotic song in discord.

Change the channel, bridge the ticking of the clock time, a difference in a mind all your own as a slurring, a capella, philosopher begins,

"Did man create time, or did time create man?"

The clicking metronome surpasses passion for timing. The composer, audience soundly ignored.

Left out of it, passionate voyeur audience to an aria of whispers through anxious hair into heated ear bitten with quickening sighs, singing

"I love you...Faster."

Under buzzing, occasionally clicking blues neon the Trio crumple in sheets, tenor, soprano, contralto. The crescendo, can you hear it? crashing instruments, clapping cadence against each other, chaos, if you listen with the desire of a lonely voyeur, you can hear it, the music of the city.

Laureen A. Connelly

Procreative Wasteland

In the thick stillness
of the sealed mausoleum
sand grains dance nervously
soundlessly
a frenzied flirtation
with the savage sun
beating and throbbing and pounding
down upon the charred terrain—
whose face, cracked and crinkled,
is the cancerous covering
of a Sun God
yearning and burning and thirsting

The dead tree
bones rotten and brittle and snapping
gives no shelter
the locust, no reprieve
and the dusty rock
hears
no giggle
from the stream

* * *

"My heart is sad tonight. Yes, sad. Stay with me. Speak to me.
Why do you never speak? Speak. What are you feeling?
What feeling? What? I never know what...or if...you are
feeling... Feel."

* * *

"Feel? Is that like touch?"

"No, feel is ...psychobabble...they used it to identify something
called...emotion."

SLOW DOWN PLEASE WE'VE TOO MUCH TIME

"E...E...Motion...like movement?"

"Perhaps...an internalized movement...of 'the affect'...
a stirring of an animus...an excitable essence...
a spirit, a soul..."

"in what dark whole lives this sole?"

SLOW DOWN PLEASE WE'VE TOO MUCH TIME

"Thankfully, it lives no more. It was often called...
love, I think...a ludicrous label for the gravitational
forces of attraction existing between two of a
corresponding species...
...it was very often an impediment to productivity."

If there were water
and no stone
If there were stone
and also water
If there were the sound of water—
—weeping warmvitalsensuousalive—
If there were only the sound
of water only

We who were living are now dying
He who was living
is now
dead

Give?
Sympathize?
Control?

But there is no water...
... none at all.

Aisling

Pattern Like Crucifixion

My romantic dreams were shattered
when I saw the bullets enter her

Body
and blood splayed out a
 pattern like crucifixion
 Hands

 Stretched out
(surely this can't last forever?)
 White and stiff

Back arched
 impossibly
Screams tore from her throat
Screams for me

 and for life
Her hands were so white and
everything else was crimson and
in slow motion—

 (wake up)
Her screams did not stop
Even when her eyes glazed over
I can still hear them
forever

my time capsule to be opened
 (when?)

Tell me, what are your dreams?

Lenio and the Sea

Lenio, my old fisherman friend,
Never returned with yesterday's catch.
They say he churns now in the silent shadows,
Dances with his turquoise Lover.

"Poor, dumb old Lenio" is his eulogy tonight,
At the wharf tavern, between gulps of Uzo.
"We always told him he went out too far.
Stupid Lenio, wanting only the fat ones,
And now they get fatter, picking his old bones!"

I remember an evening sail with Lenio,
Along the coast of Corfu;
The sky, a glass tapestry,
A pulsing firmament of swirling liquid gold.
Our faces were splashed with silver moon-shadow,
And I became slowly drunk on dreams of perfection.

Lenio seemed to know these dreams:

"The Sea has secret eyes, boy. Seething eyes-
Eyes of green fire. Never look into the secret eyes
Of the sea, boy, or She will become your forever-Lover."

I could not help laughing, for old Lenio,
Sounding so profound, was at the same time
Scratching his big brown belly.

Lenio, my old fisherman friend,
Never returned with yesterday's catch.
I will sleep on the docks tonight,
Knowing that if I dream hard enough,
Lenio will float back to me in his old, smelly skiff,
And, scratching his big brown belly, he will say,

"I've taken so much from Her. I owed her, you see,
I sleep with Her now
And those eyes

are so lovely!"

Charles Robinson

To One Who Became A Poet

one night the pain crystallizes

so she opens her veins
but she does not bleed
(blood, that is)
rather, she begins to
bleed light, yes,
rivers of light begin to flow
from her open veins
and her room quickly fills
with the light as it flows and
flows and soon her bed is adrift
on an ocean of light
and she is swimming in light
she is breathing light
light is pulsing through her brain
and she cannot understand
where the light is coming from
except that it seems, yes, it is indeed
coming from her, gushing and rushing from
the slits in her veins
so she covers the gashes with her hand
and the light stops flowing
then she removes her hand
and the light flows again

and she decides that anyone
who can bleed like this
has so much left

to give to the darkness.

Robert R. Tinaro

Dad

The sun still shines
warmly on my face,
and brighter now than it was.

The buzzing, humming days of summer
when your garden grew with reds and violets,
yellows and greens, sweet roses and leafy ferns,
fuzzy balls on the ends of weeping stems—full tomatoes
heavy tomatoes with their bitter sweet blood;
stiff and crisp cucumbers, pure and fresh
as an infant's excited gasp upon seeing trees,
Oh, the trees! The tall, strong trunks
reaching out, stroking the air with their gentle leaves
trembling in the storm winds, swaying and flowing
in the warm summer breeze.

Now, the seeds lay crouched and harboured
from winter's stripping winds
in the firm, packed soil of your garden.
Layered like the years you gave, you cared
with your magical hands—created.
Suspended and alone they can still see the sun
waiting to feel Spring without your touch.

Poetic Justice: 3 Parts

I. Morning

When my day was gloomy
she lifted the sun from the mountains
and shone her brightness on me.
Such subtle elegances are few
and far between
in lives as spent as ours.
The dome was grey with indecision
and with one instance of her precision—
 Filled was the sky
 With the blue of her eye!
 and her inspiration in her salutation
 directed toward my desperation
 could not deny my pleading cry
 for just a word of that lovely lie...

II. Midday

That there was a glimpse of hope
I would often wonder
while all the while,
she tore me asunder
 She pierced me accidentally with that pointed glance
 while lovers bathed in anointed romance
 A scream at the sight of her puncture
 harmed me more
 than her platonic pike ever could.

III. Dusk

Tossing the sun over her shoulder
my day had ended left to die
in the dark.
But she would come again, for even
as I was not
 what she wanted
I was more than what she needed.

The Watchers

Grandmother's nose is white from the icy window. She watches Bill, the overweight car salesman, unlikely heartbreaker, shoveling his driveway.

"He brings her home," she growls, "and I go to have my pills and sees her, this young babe."

Grandmother's pills guard the kitchen windowsill, brown see-through plastic bottles of cure for head and heart, some turned upside down.

"And that Marge makes the novena," she says. "I sees her." Marge is Bill's wife, pregnant with child and misery, expressionless as an inflatable doll at the young woman Bill brings home.

"Someone should call the cops," grandmother says. "Marge takes Valium to get by."

And I share her anger at this polyester prince straining flesh in the knee-deep snow. I've seen him: a face weighted down by fleshy jowls, eyes too black to be real, and a heart that's in the wrong place. Makes me wonder what they see in him, why we watch him.

Peter Johnson

Concerning Kinship of Cat and Bird

The cat's on a windowsill, tasting blood in the hollow bones of birds flying overhead. He's safe for now from tooth and claw.

His green eyes devour feathered stragglers, his tail taps. Padded paws rest on wood, like idle hands on a keyboard awaiting inspiration.

Days pass, he strains to warble, peep, chirp with a tongue unfit for song. Yet birds fall for it, lighting on branches, stare dumbly at this furry squawker.

Does this behavior suggest forgotten kinship between snout and beak? Could their shared hatred be a familial affair some ornithologist has yet to uncover, so that a bird's last screech before its neck is broken is both protest and accusation as old as the elements?

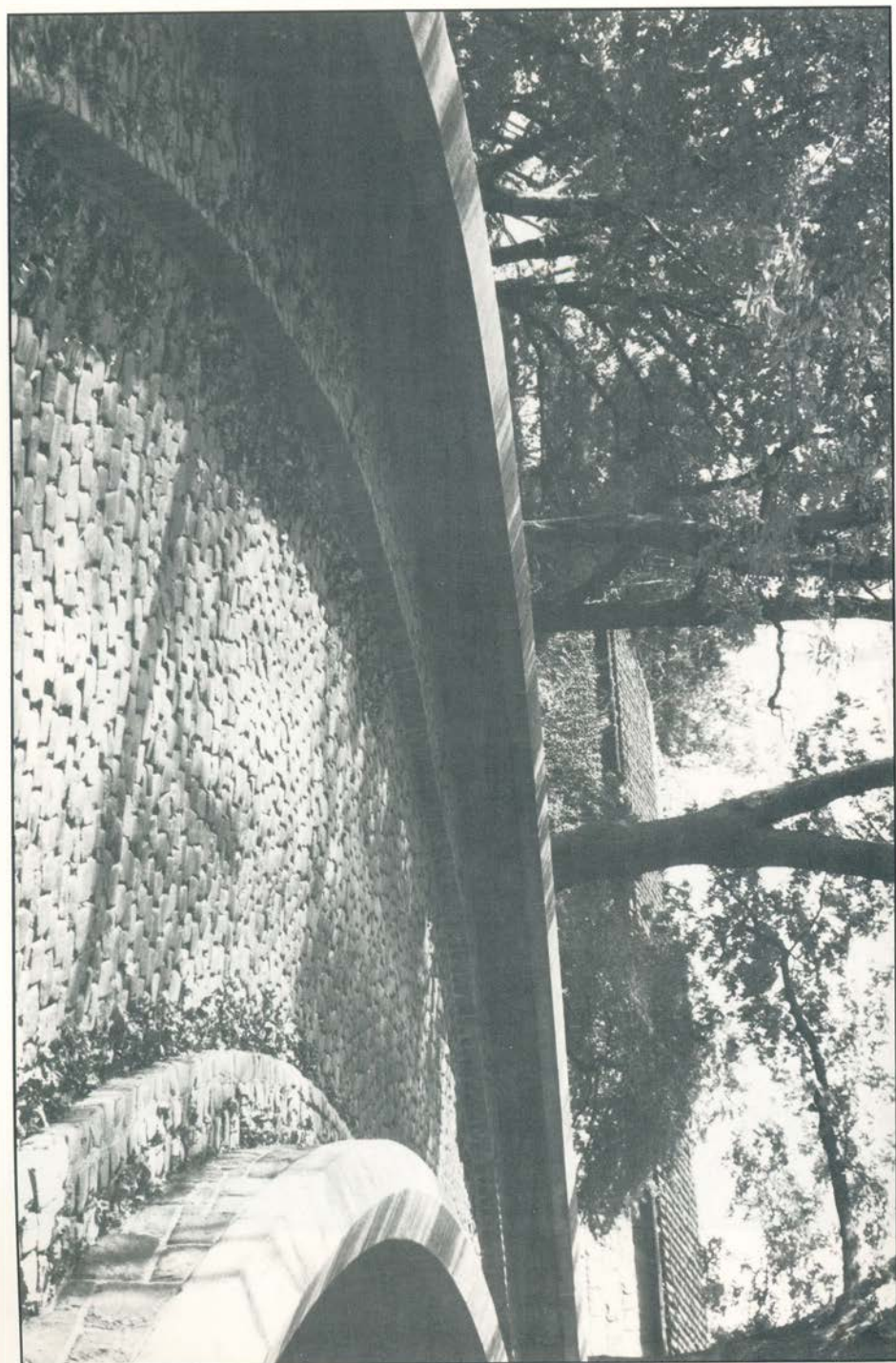
Artwork

CHAPTER 12. THE CO-ORDINATE PLANE

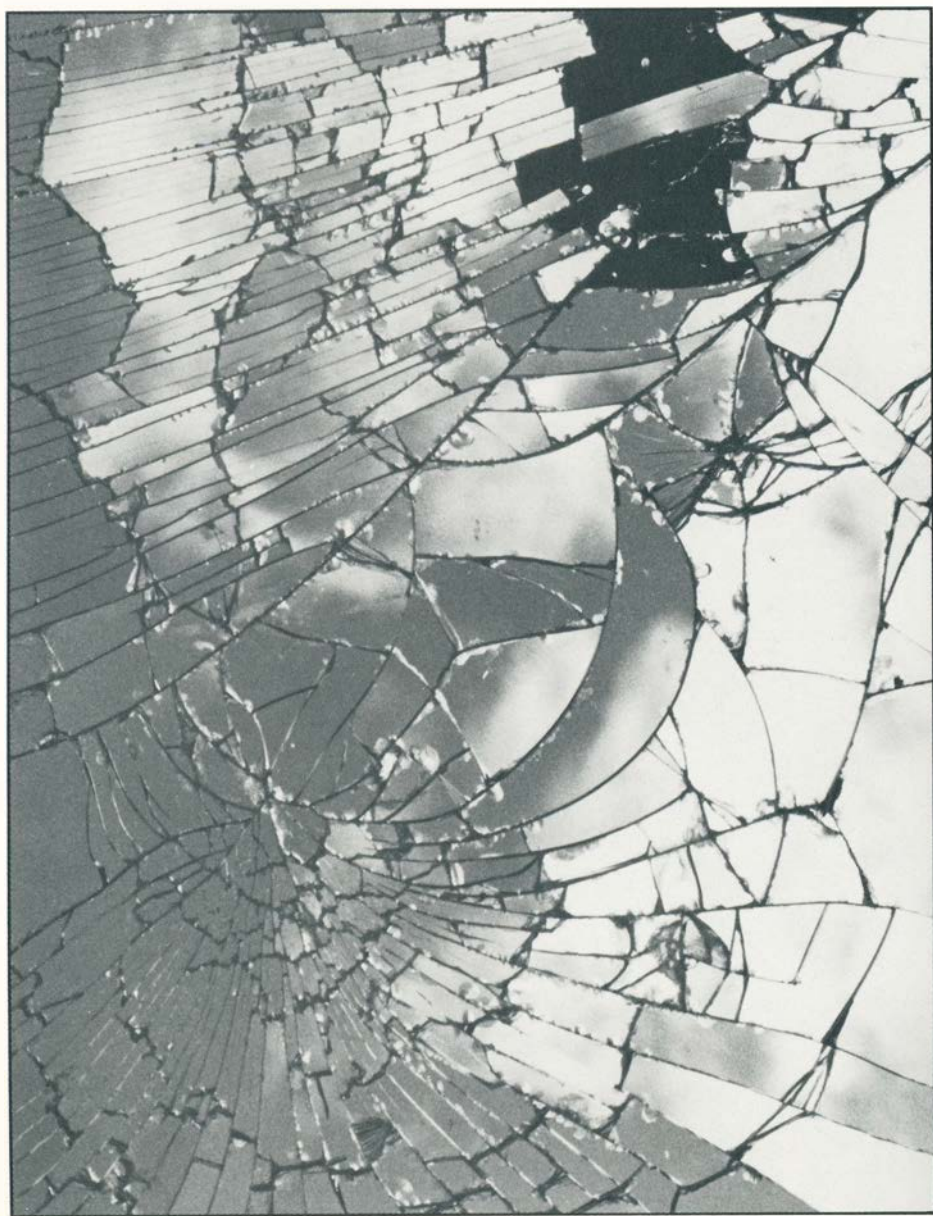
The Cartesian coordinate system is a system of two perpendicular lines, one horizontal and one vertical, intersecting at a point called the origin. The horizontal line is called the x-axis and the vertical line is called the y-axis. The origin is labeled with the letter O. The x-axis is labeled with the letter x and the y-axis is labeled with the letter y. The x-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The y-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The positive directions are labeled with the letters x and y, and the negative directions are labeled with the letters -x and -y. The x-axis is labeled with the letter x and the y-axis is labeled with the letter y. The x-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The y-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The positive directions are labeled with the letters x and y, and the negative directions are labeled with the letters -x and -y. The x-axis is labeled with the letter x and the y-axis is labeled with the letter y. The x-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The y-axis is divided into positive and negative directions by the origin. The positive directions are labeled with the letters x and y, and the negative directions are labeled with the letters -x and -y.

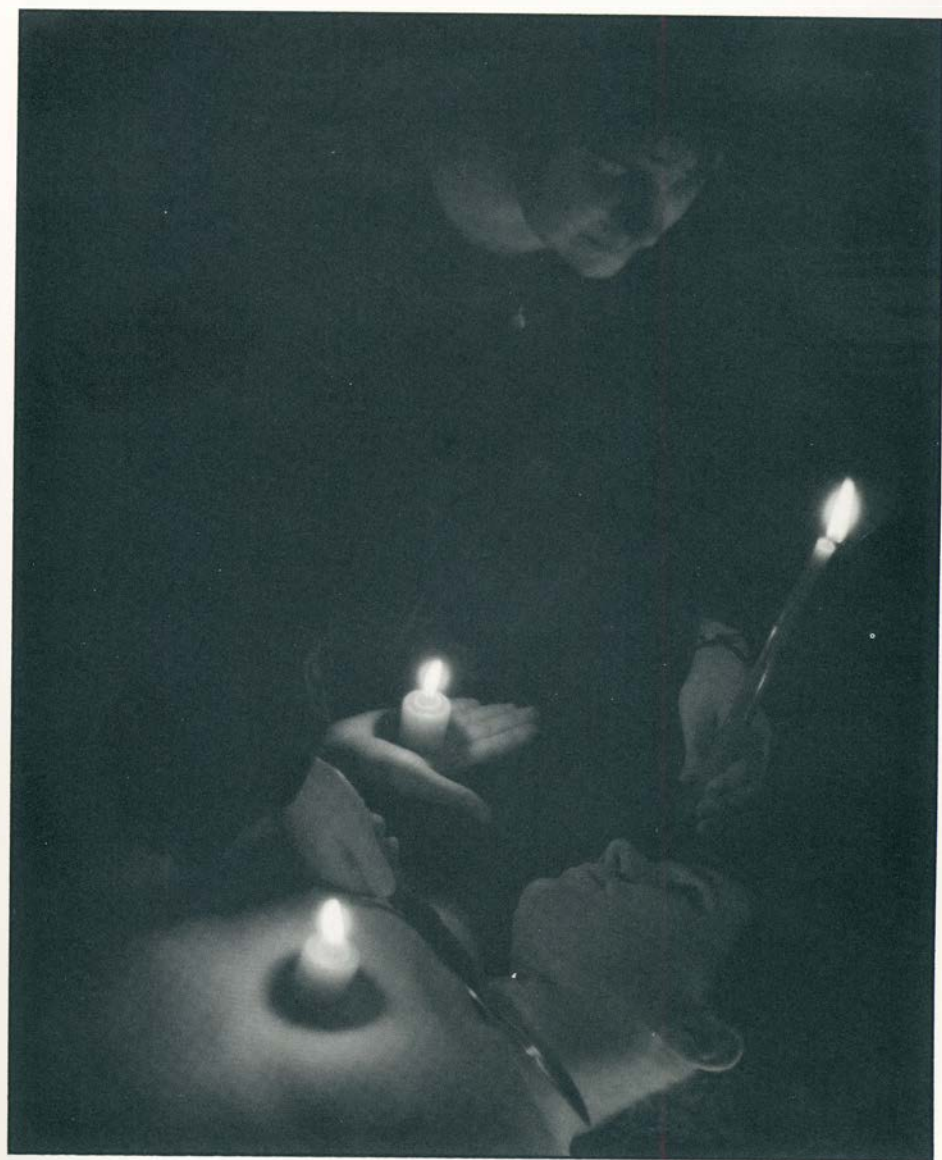
Appendix

















Reviews & Criticism

Derrida and Hirsch on Intentionality and Meaning

Derrida and Hirsch approach literature with fundamentally different "rules" and with different motives as well. Whereas Hirsch explodes the barriers of formalism horizontally to reach across texts, Derrida explodes them vertically by reaching above texts—to the very structure of language, to philosophy, to the whole history of "meaning" as a metaphysical concept. Hirsch seeks to recover the author's original meaning in a text where Derrida argues that not only is the author not to be considered in the quest for meaning but that "meaning" in and of itself does not exist.

Reacting to formalism, Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) affirms the value of meaning and meaningfulness in a text and seeks to restore the author as the rightful endower of meaning. In order to argue for such a determinacy Hirsch naturally must argue that contexts are determined by the author and that language *qua* language is fundamentally determinable to begin with: "Determinacy of verbal meaning requires and act of will" (47). Hirsch adds, however, that "this is not to say that context determines verbal meaning. At best a context determines the guess of an interpreter (though his construction of the context may be wrong, and his guess correspondingly so)" (47). Hirsch does point out that "a context is something that has itself been determined" (47) by the author first and the interpreter last and that "the essential component of a context is the intrinsic genre of the utterance" (87). For Hirsch word sequence and intrinsic genre are the determinants of meaning, although he admits that intrinsic genre is constructed or guessed and never given (88).

For Derrida it is the psychoanalytical and heterogeneous interplay of a language which is important, not the role of the "author," a term of which Derrida is suspicious. For him as well as for Hirsch context is important (*Positions passim*, but esp. 8, 26) because linguistic signs are always dependent upon one another for meaning. "Meaning" in and of itself cannot exist; it must follow what Derrida calls *differance*, a term whose definition Derrida constantly seeks to qualify (indeed for Derrida as well as for Hegel, truth exists in qualifications!).

Roughly the term means "delaying" and "differing," a process that we bring in our approach to the written word. An example cited by Derrida is the distinction between *sens blanc* and *semblant* and other word groups whose pronunciation is similar. Such words have *differance* "inscribed in them"; "they are always different from themselves and always defer any singular grasp of their meaning" (*Positions* 40 and note 5). More broadly *differance* precedes language and speech and even our current concepts of being and of reality (29).

The metaphysical implications of *differance* are vast; indeed Derrida strives to undermine the metaphysical constraints on language which the entire history of philosophy and of meaning has always maintained. *Differ-*

ance is linked to "dissemination," an irreducible multiplicity of meanings in a text which forbids the hermeneutic closure of the text and hence strict formalization as well (45). This idea explains Derrida's insistence upon the heterogeneity of texts (10)—the interdependence of linguistic signs in all texts. There are no simple origins of meaning and there is not "eschatological presence" (45): "meaning" is not an absolute, metaphysical pre-linguistic concept. *Differance* is the destruction of the metaphysical roots of language, in Derrida's view; to place the concept in a historico-philosophical context, it is "the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *releve* wherever it operates" (40-1). ("*Releve*" is the French translation of *Aufhebung*, Hegel's term for the abstraction of meaning to a metaphysical plane [and hence the negating of it in a practical context]). For Derrida meaning is important, but only in its relation to contexts and *differance*.

Derrida's *differance* implies the absence of intentionality in meaning and the absence of conscious attendance to the "performative" as opposed to the "constative" or purely "inner" utterance expressing a mental state (the "classical" sense; *Limited Inc* 7). The "performative" utterance, an important concept to Derrida, does not describe anything outside of the realm of language but rather produces an effect and transforms reality for the benefit of the speaker (*Limited Inc* 13). It has nothing to do with "truth" or "value" beyond the plane of language.

Derrida's efforts to undermine intentionality as permanent control is important in contrasting him with Hirsch. For both critics the concept of context, as stated above, is fundamental. But Derrida goes further than Hirsch by maintaining that "a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, [that] its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated" (*Limited Inc* 3). Derrida elaborates by writing that "the finiteness of a context is never secured or simple, there is an indefinite opening of every context, an essential nontotalization" (1937). Derrida undercuts Hirsch at the source by questioning the monolithic stature of meaning which the history of Western thought has given it and which essentially is the basis for Hirsch's defense of the author. This view of meaning in what Derrida would call an ontotheological, logocentric and phonologistic light must be eradicated. This view is not at all scientific, according to Derrida: it is merely a continuation of idealism (*Positions* 35, 51). The history of Western metaphysics always has been the history of the attempt to uproot meaning from language and from *differance*, and Hirsch is following in this tradition.

Derrida's own version of deconstruction, then, attempts to justify writing as a good (I use the term loosely) in itself. For him writing is "extraction, graft, extension" (*Positions* 71) which seeks to break into the closure of the literary realm. As Jean-Louis Houdebine points out, Derrida's deconstruction of the sign is a realization of it in a "physically" linguistic sphere; it is a questioning of the sign's derivation from a fundamental logocentrism, a metaphysical source (*Positions* 61). The real abasement of writing, according to Derrida, is its present situation in the philosophical hierarchy that presupposes that meaning descends *a priori* from beyond the scrutable level of language.

Derrida's systematized approach to language and literature at first may seem cold, impersonal and even inhuman, when contrasted with that of Hirsch. Professor of philosophy Ruth Barcan Marcus of Yale University

went so far as to protest Derrida's unanimous election as Director of the International College of Philosophy, saying that the election "raises the question as to whether the Ministère d'État is the victim of an intellectual fraud" (*Limited Inc* 158 [note 12]). Citing Foucault's appraisal of Derrida's writing as "obscurantisme terroriste," Professor Marcus expressed the fear of deconstruction shared by many American critics and theorists. It is true that Hirsch reflects a greater "humanity" than does Derrida. After all, Hirsch wrote during the Vietnam War era, a time in which the value of literature, indeed value itself, was coming under intense popular scrutiny. Hirsch justifies the author to the interpreter and argues for a more "human," less mechanistic reading of literature, while arguing at the same time the importance of literary scholarship and hence the academic status quo. Derrida seeks to bring literature outside the closure of the literary and academic worlds, in effect arguing for the playfulness of a language in which everyone can share (as can be seen in the essay "Limited Inc a b c..." in which Derrida plays with the meanings of words and the "validity" of authorial signatures).

Perhaps the fear of deconstruction is rooted in the fear of discovering that all man's inner psychological and emotional states can be reduced to or described as purely chemical, mechanical states. We content ourselves with the thought that our emotions and our emotional responses to phenomena such as literature are "magical" or "special" or transcendental. But does deconstruction preclude the possibility of enjoying literature as art? Derrida for one holds that deconstruction is not a negative force: it does not seek to destabilize "'the things in themselves'" (*Limited Inc* 147) in their metaphysically fortified strongholds. In this view one might say that, while Hirsch seeks to preserve the value of literature, Derrida strives to preserve the value of human responsiveness to literature by stripping it of its metaphysical aura. Perhaps in its own way deconstruction seeks to humanize language and literature. But because extra-linguistic "meaning" is such a deeply rooted concept, it will be difficult to shake; moreover the mechanistic presence of deconstruction will fail to appeal to an American culture that, at heart, still approaches literature with the white gloves of Victorian gentleness.

The Only Good War Is a Dead War
(with Apologies to Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman)

The Vietnamese war is a fascinating cultural phenomena, one which has stirred great interest among college students, and I find myself asking what literature can tell us about the experience of that action and about the way it is presently being marketed.

Much has been made lately of the idea that the Vietnam war was simply a bad war, an anomaly in United States history. After all, we stirred the world with our revolution, defended ourselves against the imperial British, fought to preserve the Union—and free slaves, defended the world twice for democracy against “barbarism”/fascism and protected the free world against communism. It adds up to a heady record of righteousness so that, when a war is lost to an underdeveloped Asiatic country, regardless of the reasons, the opinion-makers must find means to explain it away: thus, the experience of this war was “different,” not like World War II or Korea with “fronts”; thus, black troops did not do an excessive amount of the combat service, sustain a very high rate of casualties, take on the more dangerous assignments, deserve more Medals of Honor; thus, the antiwar protestors attacked and maligned the soldiers who fought in Vietnam.

Except for the first of these claims, what is described is neither the war I have studied and analyzed in government documents and various histories nor my own experience in the United States from 1964 through 1975, though these claims do reflect images of the war supported by the majority of novels and films written by white writers.

What the study of literature indicates, however, is that the battlefield experience is not described differently from Stendhal to Tolstoi, from Crane through Hemingway, Mailer and Kim into the present. Trench warfare, South Pacific and European infantry operations, and guerilla warfare get similar depictions from the point of view of the man in combat, and this fictive representation is supported by books of military history studying the fighting men by writers such as John Keegan.

Ernest Hemingway is a sure starting point here because of his literary work arising from World War I, *A Farewell to Arms*, the Nick Adams stories dealing with the Italian front, and “A Soldier’s Home.” At the outbreak of World War II, Hemingway put together a reader called *Men at War*, for which he wrote a lengthy introduction. In that, he cited the ineluctable failings of the first war—the idiocy of the command, the frightful waste of life, the lies told by the governments, the inhuman conditions of warfare, the terrifying nature of modern technology. His collection was aimed at the soldier-reader as well as, one suspects, the manly audience which was to fill the U.S. ranks.

These themes are the themes found consistently in the fiction and reporting about Vietnam. James Webb’s Lieutenant Kersey (*Fields of Fire*) represents the irresponsible figure of authority who orders a platoon to defend a tank disabled in a rice paddy, A.J. Flower’s Lt. Kicks (*De Mojo Blues*)

defend a tank disabled in a rice paddy, A.J. Flower's Lt. Kicks (*De Mojo Blues*) is the white bossman over black troops. The existence of such commanders only elaborates on a joke Michael Herr reports from the field, the difference between the Marines and the Boy Scouts: the Boy Scouts have adult leadership.

The loss of the platoon in Webb's novel, the death of Jethro, the pointman in Flowers's, the anonymous slaughter in so many films show waste enough in body-count warfare, and the presence of napalm is misdirected, faulty artillery firing, helicopter and gunship strafing, and enemy rockets as well as booby traps convey the same feeling as the machine guns and artillery barrages which were Hemingway's concern. The dusty and debilitating patrols in the mountains, the slogging through paddies, the living in the rain and humidity and heat of the jungle are a fair match for the barbarity of the trenches. The fraudulent declarations of the ambassadors and public information officers, of the commanders, are carried in the works of Herr and Ward just to name only two.

Warfare has changed, but the lot of the men fighting it has not. In the battles of *The Bamboo Bed* (William Eastlake) and *Meditations in Green* (Stephen Wright) and in the works of Webb, Flowers, Just and others and in the vivid last battle of *Platoon*, chaos is loosed. No more can the contemporary representative of the fighting man discover the "big picture" at the moment of battle than could Stephen Crane's Henry Fleming in the 1890's or Hemingway himself, and afficianado of war after being wounded in Italy as a Red Cross worker, one who devoured military and political history and biography in order, like his creation Krebs, to find some understanding of the forces which tossed him about so effortlessly.

If these were the only connections between Hemingway's work and the writers of Vietnam, there would be little value in noting them at length. But Hemingway contributes more to his successors than similarity of theme. The writers of the Vietnam period draw from Hemingway structural and stylistic devices and vignettes and descriptions. Beyond Hemingway's lasting popularity and his extraordinary literary influence, his writing acting as a kind of organizing filter for experiences half a century later, what this may suggest is that the Vietnam war is not so far removed from these earlier conflicts; the modes of expression which effectively recorded the chaos and bitterness of World War I still work. We might, on a parallel line, think of James Webb's reworking of the structure of Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* as one facet of this consistency, but Mailer himself in *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) and Stephen Wright in *Meditations in Green* (1983) do adopt directly the interchapter structure of Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925).

While some of Hemingway's brief interchapters comment upon or extend the themes of the short stories within his collection, the function in both the Vietnam works is somewhat different. Fragmentation is no longer simply a modernist structural device but has become a cliché of the cultural milieu; for Mailer and Wright, the "introbeep" and the "meditation" generally interrupt the flow of the narrative, creating static or detours which lead away from the present stage of the plot. Nonetheless, the place of sudden ironic insight for Hemingway, sustained structurally, becomes for his successors a locus of the overloading of the system—feedback—or of a heroin-induced hallucination where insight is more difficult to achieve. The structural indebtedness, however, makes each of these works an "in our

time" commentary and reflects the loss of comfort contemporary distrust of ironic simplicities generates. Still, it is the culture which has changed along with the reading of experience; the experiences themselves—barbaric violence, entrapment by technology, estrangement from nature, the question of meaning, the false rhetoric of the "leaders"—remain constant. The distance of fifty years has affected confidence in the moral *touche* in print as it has long since been rendered obsolete in battle.

For descriptive appropriateness, though, Hemingway surely holds his own today. It is not necessary to attempt to catalogue the places in Tim O'Brien's work (*If I Die in the Combat Zone, Going After Cacciato*) which echo the familiar understatement, the purity of the prose line. We can turn quickly to Michael Herr's affecting and influential new-journalistic reportage of the life of the "grunt," *Dispatches*.

While Herr's style often reflects the influence of Hemingway, there are places where Hemingway's writing is drawn directly into the text, partially I think an admiring admission by Herr that no one can do it better and that the brief poignancy of Hemingway's work captures, perhaps forever, the horrific experience of men at war. One example comes directly from the opening of *In Our Time*, "On the Quai at Smyrna," and will resonate for any reader familiar with that book; it is the final story in "Illumination Rounds," the fourth section of *Dispatches*. The scene depicts Herr talking to a twenty-nine year old major inside a tent during a rain squall; five enlisted men are listening; situation and casualty reports are coming in rapidly. The major notes that a dead Marine costs eighteen thousand dollars as the soldiers listen in. The rain stops, and the tent is vacated:

"I've been having this dream," the major said. "I've had it two times now. I'm in a big examination room back at Quantico. They're handing out questionnaires for an aptitude test. I take one look at it, and the first question says 'How many kinds of animals can you kill with your hands?'

We could see rain falling in a sheet about a kilometer away. Judging by the wind, the major gave it three minutes before it reached us.

"After the first tour, I'd have the goddamnest nightmares. You know, the works. Bloody stuff, bad fights, guys dying, *me* dying...I thought they were the worst," he said. "But I sort of miss them now."

Another, a direct reference to one of Hemingway's stories of the effect of battle, comes early in the first section of the book, indicating the distance of the new arrival Herr from the combat troops:

"Day one, if anything could have penetrated that first innocence I might have taken the next plane out. Out absolutely. It was like a walk through a colony of stroke victims, a thousand men on a cold and rainy airfield after too much of something I'd never really know, 'a way you'll never be,' dirt and blood and torn fatigues, eyes that poured out a charge of steady horror."

And, near the close of Herr's book, still another clear relationship is established in "Breathing Out":

"Hemingway once described the glimpse he'd had of his soul after being wounded, it looked like a fine white handkerchief drawing out of his body, floating away and then returning. What floated out of me was more like a huge gray 'chute, I hung there for a long time waiting for it to open. Or not."

So, is it true that Vietnam was a different war, a "bad" war? Oh, yes, it was *bad*—for the men who fought it, but that's *not* different at all. And the continuity of the representations of war in the writing about it, the appropriateness of the essence of fifty-year old scenes, and the looming shadow of Ernest Hemingway over the writing about Vietnam indicate with a sniper's accuracy a description of war that today's self-serving political rhetoric, perhaps intended to rewrite history so that the reading audience of the next generation will believe Vietnam an unhappy anomaly rather than more of the same, may not evade.

Economic Dilemmas of the Latin American Left

There is no disputing the fact that the Left has made a strong showing in many of Latin America's recent presidential elections, most notably with the victory of Carlos Menem of the Peronist Party in Argentina and Patricio Aylwin in Chile. The excellent showing of left-wing candidate Luiz Ignacio da Silva (Lula) in Brazil's recent elections is also indicative of the resurgence of the Left in Latin America.

One of the primary goals of a left-wing regime in Latin America is to improve the lives of the poor. The typical strategy of left-wing, populist regimes in Latin America (e.g., Peron in Argentina, Goulart in Brazil, Allende in Chile) to reduce poverty is based on 1) increased government expenditures, usually not accompanied by increased tax revenues and 2) large increases in real wages. These policies often yield short term economic gains, but more often than not they are followed by disastrous long term economic and political consequences: large budget deficits, high inflation, and balance of payments difficulties. Private investment also suffers, as domestic and international capital await a more favorable economic and political climate. Eventually standards of living fall and political support from the middle class for the left crumbles, opening the door for a possible military takeover.

It is rather clear that any left regime that is serious about its long term survival must avoid this all too common pattern of populist economic policy. While Mr. Menem in Argentina and Mr. Aylwin in Chile seem to have heeded these lessons of the past, the platforms of many of Brazil's left-wing candidates have shown no such recognition of the limited success of populist policy.

The key to reversing the long run economic crisis in Latin America, many argue, is to reverse the decline in investment as a percentage of GDP. A key determinant of the economic success of a left wing administration will be its ability to convince multinational and domestic capital to engage in domestic investment. This, in turn, will depend on the ability of the administration to convince capital that the regime has long-term viability, both economically and politically. If capital perceives that the regime will soon be out of power, it can await a political regime that is not only more economically stable, but is less likely to redistribute income from capital to labor. Hence, it is of paramount importance to the left that they convince capital that their economic policies do not engender economic and political chaos.

All this suggests that the Latin American left must steer an economic course considerably more conservative than that traditionally endorsed by the Left. The dilemma for the left, of course, is that this more conservative economic strategy may lose them the support of their working class backers. Without large increases in government spending and large real wage increases, the working class may find it has scant reason to support such a platform. The experience of the socialist government of Mitterand in France in the 1980's, for example, suggests that the working class will not support a

socialist government that pursues conservative policies, even if these policies were undertaken to correct macroeconomic difficulties. The Menem regime in Argentina is currently suffering a similar plight, as Menem's austerity policies have lead to a significant loss of support from organized labor.

This implies that the left, to stay in office, must educate its followers regarding the increases in living standards they can realistically expect to achieve. This does not imply that government is unable to enact policies to help the poor. Indeed, in much of Latin America considerable room exists for increased public spending for the poor and income redistribution. Greater income equality and the adoption of a modern social welfare state are not necessarily incompatible with economic growth and capital accumulation. For example, greater expenditures on health and education, financed by taxes, cannot only increase living standards for the poor, but also have a beneficial impact on labor productivity. In any case, the Latin American left must not pin its hopes on the traditional populist prescription of rapid increases in government spending and real wages if it hopes to provide effective solutions to the vexing problems of poverty and income inequality.

Not Ambitious Enough

Donald Hall's important new book is at first puzzling, then deeply impressive, and finally incomplete.

Initially *Poetry and Ambition* reads like a whacky compendium of neologism, choplogic, mixed or mangled metaphor, and inexplicable omission. Hall doesn't "believe in spondees," for example, he does not want poetry called "musical," preferring the word "noise," he likes to experience "attacks of language" (is language a virus?), and he finds the word *food* in itself delicious. "Prosaic" poetry can be good; he talks about "leg-sound" and "mouth-guilt"; and poetry in general is a sort of "infantile sexuality." Often (and rightly) absorbed in sound as well as sense, Hall nevertheless compounds the problems of rhythmical analysis by comparing poetic sound to mountains and rivers both, by raising the standard of something he calls "visual rhythm," by largely omitting from the discussion the great orchestrators of past poetic sound, and by not offering clear and consistent definitions of key terms like *form*, *rhythm*, and *prosody*. Hall has a bias against translation; against all theory, past and present; and his actual scansion (of Creeley, for instance) often suggests a bad eye, or a bad ear, or both. "Where they once walked" Hall scans as simple iambic pentameter—surely "once" deserves more stress than that. Moreover, I could find nowhere in this book a grappling with the great principle of variety in poetic rhythm. Instead Hall simply bestows lavish but dubious praise, calling the style of Pound, for example, pre-eminent in its "flatness" and "stylelessness."

On the other hand *Poetry and Ambition* is a courageous book. "Live forever!" Hall urges in the very first sentence, for he "can see no reason to spend your life writing poems unless your goal is to write great poems." The stuff of Hamburger U, the "McPoem," is worthless; help abolish the MFA: "*Iowa delenda est!*" Ignore *Coda*, the "poebusiness" that prowls the land, the deadening emphasis on "quantification," and remember that "talk kills poetry." Flee from authors who

are specialists in slack free verse, writing poems that are autobiographical, narcissistic, brief, short-lined and end-stopped, with no attention to sound or syntax, with all attention to image, detail and the SELF.

Hall goes on to boldly condemn the final productions of Robert Lowell and Robert Penn Warren. They are both "hurry, hurry, hurry," not much better than the "*ten billion served*" McPoems of America. He takes on Helen Vendler and Irvin Ehrenpreis, ridicules "aesthetic airheads" in general, and advances the cause of Galway Kinnell, Robert Bly, Denise Levertov, and Adrienne Rich.

Hall is provocative enough; he is not always convincing. He's not primarily concerned with detailed evidence or final proof. His judgements tend to be highly inventive but absolute, surly in fact. His opponents had best

beware, however: Hall is a highly informed critic with a broad and deep understanding of his field. In one context or another he cites Keats, Virgil and Horace. He worries about specialization among poets and critics, and deplors the separation of literature and writing departments. He *does* distinguish between mere desire for praise and "true ambition"—a desire to "make words that live forever." He writes sensibly about "failure": neither avoidable nor calamitous, it is often inseparable from great literary effort. He damns the suburbs ("the same burger from coast to coast"), damns mere routine, and damns a mere mentalizing of poetry. When Hall writes about authors now in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, he distinguishes among the various locales with care. He quotes Brodsky forcefully: "Poetry is the supreme result of the entire language."

Possibly the best example of Hall's embracing vision of things is the discussion of mania in literary history. First avoiding the extremes—mania does not guarantee great writing nor should it be dismissed as romantic—he then touches gently but firmly on the troubled careers of Lowell and Roethke. "The confidence and energy of a limited manic state," he says, and the key word is certainly *limited*, is a "divine afflatus" which can produce "great art." Undoubtedly manic persons invented both the epic and the wheel. They have been saints, mystics and mathematicians—and respected as such. For Hall mania is "essential to the survival of the species."

But finally, is the book ambitious enough? Hall's blast is loud enough at the start; then he goes on to chat, to wander about, and to obscure or dilute the initial view. He looks to Whitman, Eliot and Pound as modern greats, but when he regards a poem of Kinnell closely—"Blackberry Eating"—he admits that the practice does not measure up to the ideal of greatness (including Kinnell's, which he quotes), and still he extols the poem. Hall's loud pronouncements often jar with his faint critical performance. He loves and admires Louis Simpson. Does he quote the poet's most ambitious lines? "He woke at five and, unable / to go back to sleep, / went downstairs." The discussion of Phillip Larkin also undermines the initial commitment to greatness in *Poetry and Ambition*. Hall now claims that "second-rate work from a first-rate writer has its utility." Was Larkin being silly when he asked, "Who's Jorge Luis Borges?" For Hall the "silliness is essential to his excellence." Did Larkin defend "the Lightweight Tradition?" Well, Hall reminds us, Larkin himself is "nobody's lightweight." Hall even commends Larkin's "genuine, uncultivated, sincere Philistinism."

The book lacks attention to other matters. There is really very little in-depth focus on metaphor, vision, character (in the full sense), and truth (at least literary truth)—regrettably so in a work dealing with great poetry. Or were these deficiencies part of the overall design? Did the book have to fail a little to strive for greatness? Was Hall mainly concerned with a generally aggravating zaniness, a desire to rouse his reader (in the Blakean manner) to read on, possibly to respond with energy and wrath? No doubt Hall himself will read and write on. This book is galvanic enough, competent and incisive, if not always persuasive.

Contributors Notes

Robert O'Shaughnessy is a member of the class of 1993 from Ohio whose major is ambiguous.

Krissie Glover is from Beverly, MA and is an English major from the class of 1992.

Kim Camlet idolizes Poe, the Ramones, and thinks armadillos are really nifty.

Jessica Shannon is a Photography major and member of the class of 1992.

Dr. Edward McCrorie, Professor of English (and Department Chair this year) is the author of *After a Cremation*, a book of poems published in Berkeley in 1975, and *Virgil: The Aeneid*, a poetry translation to be published this year by Donald Grant Press here in Rhode Island.

Peter Mayer is a class of 1992 History major from Oneonta, NY who writes when he feels necessary.

Michael J. Bellotti is a geologist and amateur photographer living in Cleveland, TN.

Michael Tata is a gila monster.

Julie Girard is a Business Administration major from the class of 1991.

Colleen Fitzgerald of Short Hills, NJ is currently a member of the class of 1991 and is majoring in Art History.

Ed Moore is an English major from the class of 1990 who, in the future, hopes to stretch his writing abilities "like gold to airy thinness beat."

William Stafford of Lake Oswego, OR has been writing for thirty years and among his collections in print are *An Oregon Message*, and *Stories That Could Be True* from Harper and Row, *Smoke's Way* from Graywolf Press, and such prose works as his two on writing from The University of Michigan Press, *Writing the Australian Crawl* and *You Must Revise Your Life*.

Laureen Connelly is an English major from the class of 1991 pursuing what is meant to be.

At present, **Phyllis Janowitz** is Associate Professor at Cornell and Chair of the Creative Writing Committee; her latest book of poetry is *Temporary Dwellings* (Pitt Poetry Press, 1988).

Mike Perrow has lived most of his life in Virginia, especially rural Virginia, where varied landscapes and voices fuel his writing.

Pamela C. Mulcahy is an English major from the class of 1992.

Diane Bernard is an English major from the class of 1990.

Joseph Grossi, a native of Providence, is an English major and a member of the class of 1990.

Tracey Newman is an English major who, besides writing poetry, also acts in various companies, signs, draws, and enjoys the occasional evening out dancing.

Richard Murphy enjoys teaching modern and contemporary literature and film at Providence College.

Ai's new book, *FATE*, will be out in the Spring of 1991.

John Hayes is an English major from the class of 1990 who plans to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Maria Pavao is an English major from the class of 1992 who sees college as a meaningless exercise in rote memorization.

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Kyra Galvan, author of *Un Pequeno Moreton En La Piel De Nadie*, is a Mexican poet currently living in Japan. **W. S. Merwin** is one of the masters of modern poetry and author of such famous books as *The Lice*, *Opening The Hand*, *The Rain In The Trees*, and numerous translations from various languages.

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